Specific Mills

NEW!

NOW WITH MINERALS!

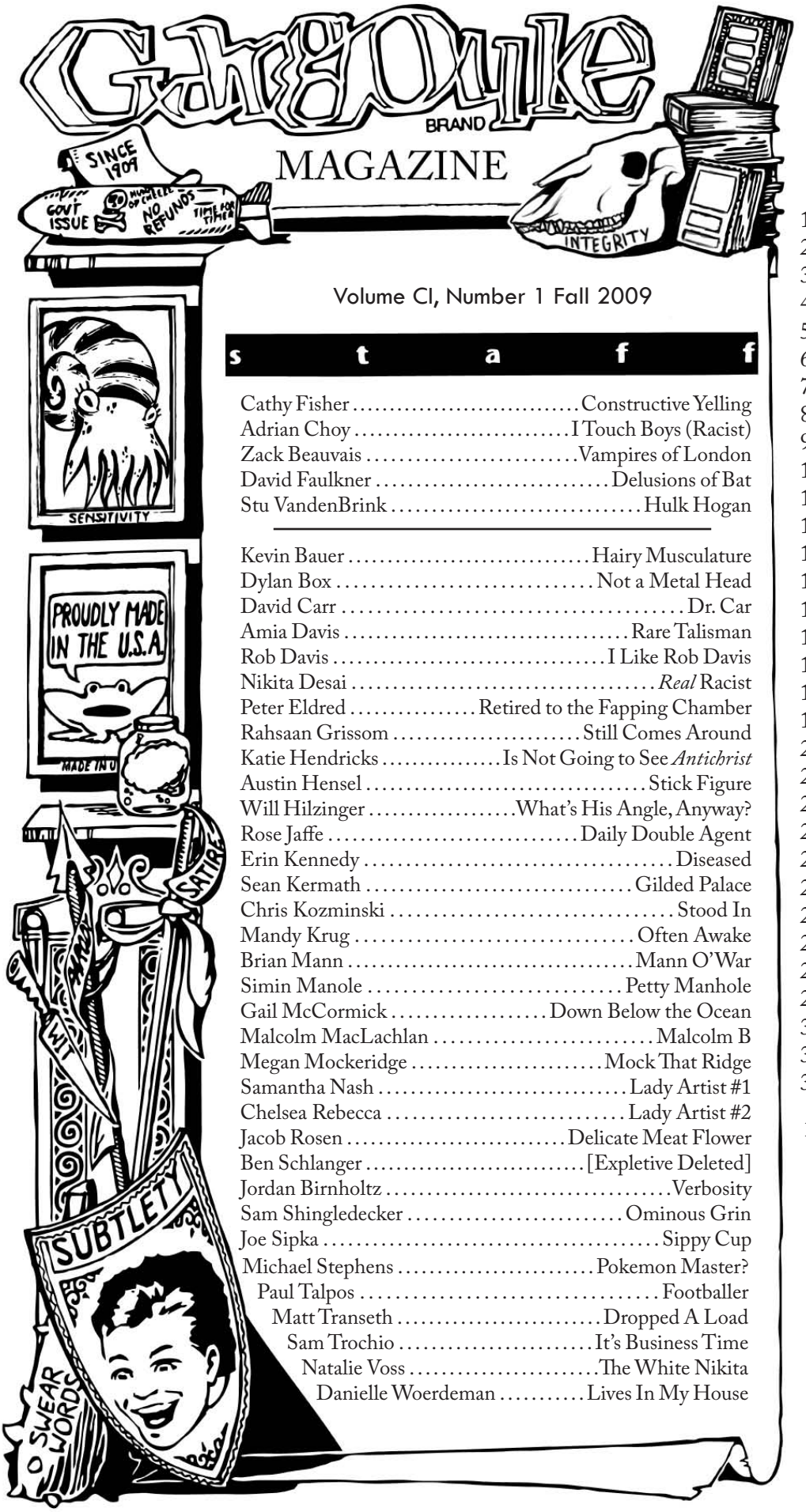
PUMICE BERRY

Gargoyle

Gravel Puffs

NOT ★ FOR ★ EATING!!

FREE NEEDLES INSIDE



Volume CI, Number 1 Fall 2009

staff

Cathy Fisher ..... Constructive Yelling
Adrian Choy ..... I Touch Boys (Racist)
Zack Beauvais ..... Vampires of London
David Faulkner ..... Delusions of Bat
Stu VandenBrink ..... Hulk Hogan

Kevin Bauer ..... Hairy Musculature
Dylan Box ..... Not a Metal Head
David Carr ..... Dr. Car
Amia Davis ..... Rare Talisman
Rob Davis ..... I Like Rob Davis
Nikita Desai ..... *Real* Racist
Peter Eldred ..... Retired to the Fapping Chamber
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Katie Hendricks ..... Is Not Going to See *Antichrist*
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Will Hilzinger ..... What's His Angle, Anyway?
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Mandy Krug ..... Often Awake
Brian Mann ..... Mann O'War
Simin Manole ..... Petty Manhole
Gail McCormick ..... Down Below the Ocean
Malcolm MacLachlan ..... Malcolm B
Megan Mockeridge ..... Mock That Ridge
Samantha Nash ..... Lady Artist #1
Chelsea Rebecca ..... Lady Artist #2
Jacob Rosen ..... Delicate Meat Flower
Ben Schlanger ..... [Expletive Deleted]
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Sam Shingledecker ..... Ominous Grin
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Direct all praise, complaints, submissions, and proclamations to
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Visit us at http://www.gargmag.com/
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Pandas wait ‘til marriage.

Philosophy

By Cathy

Welcome to another year of the *Gargoyle*. With the same lame editor writing the same lame philosophy, but with slightly different content. And different staffers. And it looks different.

So it's fairly different overall. Do you want a list of upcoming *Gargoyle*-approved events here in Ann Arbor? *We have that now.* Do you want a couple accounts of recent concerts? *We have that too.* Do you want a guide to which classes you should take next semester? Well, we don't have that, but *we thought about it*.

The *Gargoyle* is the same, but different, just the way some of you may or may not like it. I'm not going to commit myself to any opinion because I'm mostly afraid of our readership. That's why I spend most of my days holed away in Garghouse, my secret lair, compulsively washing my ears and making tuna salad.

Did you hear that Travelin' TJ is back in town? He is. Tell all your friends.

So some of you might have noticed that we didn't print a summer issue this year. Sadly, budgetary concerns forced us to limit the number of issues we put out this year to just three, so we cut the one that's usually the shittiest and made of recycled, old, moldy content. It didn't upset me too much to cut it loose. Largely because it meant that I'd only have to write three Philosophies rather than four. Writing a Philosophy is like taking an electric sander to your face. Or listening to an actual philosophy major talk for more than ten minutes.

The point is, though, that we're slowly shrinking towards oblivion while at the same time becoming more and more popular on campus. Or so it seems. Sometimes we get a lot of feedback, sometimes we don't get any at all. I'm not sure how the whole popularity thing works. The *Garg* staff collectively has never had much personal experience with it (excepting, of course, Z. Beauvais, J. Rosen, and S. Shingledecker, none of whom talk to us much, anyway).

We had another alumni gathering last weekend, celebrating our hundredth anniversary, a little belatedly. They're really very disturbing people. Don't ever talk to us once we graduate. Please, it's for your own good.

Part of the campaign to publicize this issue will be a mass stenciling of Ann Arbor. If you see stencils of burgers, *Garg* logos, or pandas copulating, you'll know who put them there. If you picked up this issue because of the stencils, congratulations! You're officially a target audience. Let us know what you think of the stencils and how you reacted to them. We're genuinely curious about it, and will likely publish your responses in the next issue.

Early this semester, we were challenged to a football game by another campus publication. We won the game handily, by a margin of many points. We won't gloat, but the game was really a fantastic and heady victory for us. We had a great time and hope the players from the other publication don't feel too bad about their loss.

Once again, if you want to keep up to date with the latest *Gargoyle* goings-on, subscribe to our blog, read archived issues, and buy *Gargoyle* merchandise at http://www.gargmag.com/ and follow us on Twitter @GargMag. We love to hear what our readers like, dislike, and are sexually aroused by.

Mail

Direct all hate mail and suspicious parcels to
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Visit us on the Interwebnet at:
http://www.gargmag.com/

[Transcribed from an actual conversation. -Ed.]

Hey. H-hey, *Gargoyle*.

I heard you like JOKES. Wanna hear a JOKE?

"Mary had a little pup,
She kept it in her room.
(For certain types of cleaning up
a mop beats a broom.)"

-Canton Belanger

Hey! *Gargoyle*!

Who do you think you are? Michael Phelps? I don't think so, Sir. I DON'T THINK SO.

-Elliott T. Worbis

Dear Elliott,

Oh yeah? Well you're no Jackie Joyner-Kersee, yourself.

-The Gargoyle

You there,

I can't seem to find my hat. Do you know where my hat is? I just had it yesterday when I went to the farm, but today I can't find it. Did you take my hat? I swear, if you took my hat I'm going to spit in your mouth! You'll take it! Take my spit! And you'll like it! Oh God, why did you take my hat? Why?! Give me my hat back, you sick fuck! It's just a hat! What do you want from me?!

Sincerely,
Farmer Steve

Attn: *Gargoyle Magazine* or Current Resident,

Your account has had a balance on it for more than 30 days. Please pay the balance and any related late fees before the fifteenth, or your electricity will be shut off.

-The Church Mice

Gargoyle-

Every morning I consume one page of your magazine as a part of my daily ritual, before flaying the skin from my feet. Just wanted you to know the profound effect you have on your readers.

-Herbert

Dear *Gargoyle*,

My name is Vladimir. At age two, both of my parents perished in a tragic garbage disposal accident while I was outside chopping wood in preparation for the winter months. After six months of surviving on nothing but the rotting corpses of my dead mother and father, I was found and put in an orphanage on the Jersey Shore.

Three years ago, with nothing in my life worth living for, I found your magazine in a gas station bathroom in Iowa. Before using it, I caught a glimpse of the most beautiful writing I had ever seen. The memory of that page has been my one thread of sanity through this decrepit piece of shit I call my life. Thank you, *Gargoyle*, for making the world a brighter place, if just for this one ten-year-old.

Love,
Vlad

Mail, Part Two

SOMEONE WUVS US??

By Sam Nash

Who loves the *Gargoyle*? The short answer: Everyone. The long answer: Every one of the art students, social outcasts, and perpetually prepubescent boy-men that lurk the mean streets of Ann Arbor. Another facet of our dedicated readership is the "unique" students that make up the Residential College.

While walking through the catacombs of East Quad, where these "RC-ers" are taught God-knows-what in windowless, frigid rooms, a couple of our members came upon an idol of some sort—a papier-mâché Cthulhu* made completely out of *Gargoyle* magazines.

Who or what is responsible for this divine creation? Well, none other than the RC's own Kat Tomchuck.

Kat lovingly ripped apart NINE *Gargoyle* magazines in order to make this four-foot shrine! When asked why she selected the *Gargoyle* as sculpting material as opposed to the Daily or some other campus publication, Kat remarked, "It's the artwork, really."

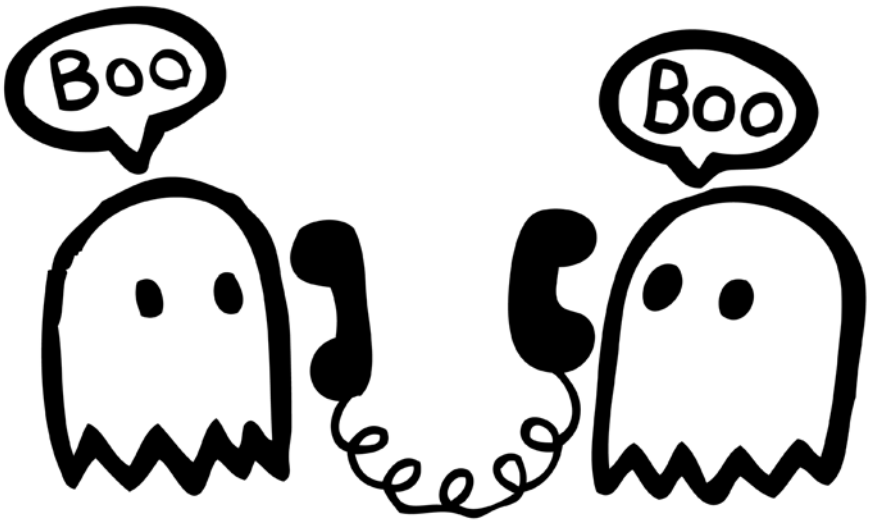
I decided to put the artist's devotion to our beloved humor magazine to the test by asking her a question that, before initiation, each staff member must answer correctly and sincerely:

"If you could either save the *Gargoyle* or a crate full of babies from a rampaging Cthulhu, which would you choose?"

Without hesitation, Kat chose the *Gargoyle*, solely on the basis that "it would smell less." On this, I assured her that she obviously hadn't visited our office.

*For readers who are not fluent in Nerd, Cthulhu is a fictional squid-faced, winged and scaly monster created by horror author H.P. Lovecraft in 1926.

Pictured: Kat Tomchuck, with her 4-foot Gargoyle Cthulhu sculpture.



Punch Line

By Malcolm MacLachlan

ZAP!
Darkness.

Jeremy opened his eyes. Slowly. He blinked twice and opened them again, blinded by light.

A crowd of curiously similar male faces peered over him.

He realized that he was lying on grass.

"Who're you?" One of the teens asked.

His hair had a sort of intrinsic shape that made it seem as if it ought to be in motion. Raised upward from his forehead, it brought out his blue eyes.

Muffled sounds of show tunes coming from somewhere nearby.

Jeremy opened his mouth as if to say something. Took a quick survey of his observers with darting eyes. Colorful bunch they all were.

"Uhh. Jeremy."

He sat up.

"I'm Jeremy."

A flurry of names that Jeremy promptly forgot. One looked as if he had just finished playing tennis. Complete with a sharp white outfit.

Still out of sorts and in a kind of shock at his local amnesia, Jeremy hesitated to converse further.

"Where're you from—why are you dressed like that—what are you doing on the grass?" Several spoke at once.

Jeremy looked at his body. Jeans and a pastel yellow T-shirt, moccasins without socks. Not really unusual garb. But not quite the style being emulated by those standing over him.

The only black member of the group fixed the collar on his pink polo. White and green shoes. Alligator on the side. Or crocodile? Crocodile. Also on the chest. Another on the headband below skillfully sculpted locks.

Jeremy attempted to stand up to answer and sunk back down, disoriented.

"Where is this?" He asked, ignoring their questions. "Where am I?"

Before the blond youth had time to respond, a barrage of images flooded his head. The common hair and clothing style of the young men. Their overwhelmingly androgynous appearance. The curious absence of women.

With a sudden realization his state of being became clear.

Damn it, Rick, he thought. Damn you, Rick Marshall. That fucking radio of yours sent me to the—

"LAND OF LACOSTE," the boy said.

Elevator

By Natalie Voss

Walking once more into my bland, soul-sucking office building, I realized I was faced with it again. The elevator. The fucking piece of shit elevator. I had to take it up to my office every single damn day because the stairs were out of order and no mechanic would come in and fix them. Aw sure, the elevator was new, put in only two years ago, in the year of our Lord 2007, but you think that made me trust it? Shit.

"Hey there, George! Did you have a great weekend or what?" piped Debbie, the all-too-enthusiastic floor midwife.

"Fuck you," I said, enjoying the shocked expression blooming over her pointy, baby-delivering face.

The elevator arrived, its cheery "ding" just enough to dissolve the last of my good humor. I gave it the finger before stepping inside. Hand trembling, I hit the button for the 16th floor. Debbie, now quiet in the face of her own pointless existence, got off on the 5th floor; Nick, the office pest control worker joined me on the 9th. I waited until he had left the next floor up before dissolving into tears and wetting myself. I sank to the ground, hysterical, until I arrived at my floor. Three people stood before me, gloating at my involuntary bowel release and general repulsiveness. Pulling myself together, I swore at them and bit at their ankles before crawling from the elevator and wiping the snot from my beard. Going to my cubicle, I removed my emergency pants from a drawer and stripped loudly. Soon I was ready for another typical day at the office.

You're A Man Now, Charlie Brown

By Jacob Rosen

Charlie's eyes opened slowly, like flowers blooming through the late winter frost. Groaning, he inhaled the morning air, preparing himself for a full day of school and the inevitable embarrassment of the daily football game. The yellow and black shirt he had slept in felt a bit snug, and his midriff caught a breeze from the open window. Nevertheless, Charlie pulled up his shorts and struggled to fit the brown shoes on his feet. As he rubbed the sleep from his eyes, his hand ran across a bump on his cheek. Concerned, Charlie rushed to the bathroom mirror.

The forever unforgiving glass showed a red blemish, adorned with a bulging white tip, ready to burst at the slightest cough or sneeze. To make matters worse, soft peach fuzz had begun to fill in the empty space around his lone strand of hair. Charlie brushed his fingers across the budding follicles and gasped. Never in his life had hair grown anywhere except his forehead, despite those around him effortlessly sprouting gorgeous locks. And on the front of his neck was a small bulge, a swelling Adam's apple. His mouth gaping, Charlie tried to exclaim "Good grief!" but all his sore vocal chords could vibrate was—

"Wah-wah!" His palms quickly covered his mouth. What were these noises? He had heard them before when he was in class or speaking to his parents, but never would he dare to emit such grunts. *What's happening to me?* Charlie tried again.

"Wah-wahwahwah-wahwah." He whimpered and tears began to flow down his cheeks. With any luck they would sterilize the hoard of acne forming under his greasy skin. Fear came quickly and painfully. Charlie ran downstairs and called out to his parents. *Mom! Dad!*

"Wah! Wah!" His caregivers were sitting at the breakfast table drinking their morning coffee. Charlie had never noticed the facial features he shared with them, and for the first time he began to crave a cup of coffee himself.

"Wahwahwah wah?" Dr. Brown asked. Charlie frantically explained in detail these strange, pulsating bumps on his face. The stimulated follicles growing not just on his head, but on his upper lip and chin. The dampness in his pajama bottoms in the morning, awaking only to the memory of Lucy (her blue blouse absent from her naked body) finally allowing him to kick the football. And most importantly, how every word he attempted to utter came out as a clusterfuck of nasal gibberish.

"Wahwah-wah wahwahwahwah-wah wah wah wahwah-wah, wahwah-wah-wahwahwah. Wah, wahwah-wah-wahwah wah wah…" As he spoke, Dr. and Mrs. Brown looked at each other and smiled proudly.

Charlie's father placed his large hand on his son's shoulder.

"Wahwahwah wah wah wah." Dr. Brown had tears in his eyes and the morning light shone in from the kitchen window. Mrs. Brown rushed upstairs. "Wahwah wah wahwah wah-wah. Wah wah wah wah wah. Wah wah wah wahwah wahwahwah-wah wah wah wah wah wahwah-wahwah wah wah wah wahwah-wah wah wah. Wah wah wah wah-wah."

Charlie's mother emerged with a black velvet box. She too had tears forming as she presented the box to her son.

Charlie suspiciously took the box and opened it. Inside was a silver pen, which reflected the sunlight, giving it an ominous glow. On it was carefully engraved, "Wahwahwah wah wahwah wah, wahwahwahwah-wah." He looked at it for a few moments, then broke into tears. Again, his parents smiled knowingly and led him to the table for his morning meal of grapefruit, coffee and bran flakes, rather than yesterday's orange juice and Lucky Charms.

Shoulders slumped lower than normal, Charlie walked to the bus stop despite begging his parents to let him stay home, ashamed of his condition. The bus pulled up as soon as Charlie arrived. About to reach the steps, the bus driver spotted his pimples, greasy skin and stubble. Slowly, she shook her head and closed the door. Charlie would have cried as the bus drove off in a cloud of smog if he had any tears left in his empty glands.

The bell for class rang just as Charlie arrived at the school after his unexpected twenty five minute walk. Eyes red and feet sore, he rushed into his first class.

"Wahwah, wah wah wahwah wahwah wah wah wah wah-wahwah wah?" Asked the teacher, wondering why he was so late. He was speechless. Linus, Pig-Pen, Schroeder, Marcy, and Peppermint Patty all looked at him strangely.

"Charlie, what's wrong?" Inquired Lucy. Suddenly, all of Charlie's recent dreams flashed in his head. He imagined her as she had been the night before, embracing him without that cumbersome blouse, stroking his hair and wiping the salty tears from his eyes. The class watched in horror as Charlie felt his pants tighten. *On no! Good grief!* he said instinctively.

"Wah wah! Wah-wah!" A unanimous gasp was let out by the chorus of innocents. Their teacher nodded, wrote a class room number down on a sheet of paper and gave it to Charlie. As he walked out of the startled room, he looked back. Linus was nervously wringing his blue blanket and Pig-Pen was clearing his cloud of dust to get a better look at his mature peer. Everyone he knew was exactly the way he remembered them. Charlie then looked at himself. His arms were showing definition, testicles were hanging lower than he had ever known them to, and the thoughts in his head began to sound much like the words that now came from his mouth. Charlie turned around, choking back tears, and left. He knew he would never see any of them again.

Ann Arbor Cultural Calendar

Can You Find the Joke?

November

1
Cairn to Cairn (The Ark)
Christine Brewer (UMS)

2
Playing for Change Band (The Ark)

3
ISSA (The Ark)

4
Erin McKeown & Jill Sobule (The Ark)

5
EarthTones 2009
Megan Mooney (A2 Comedy Showcase)

6
Meet artist Nora Venturelli (WSG Gallery)
Ron White (Michigan Theater)
Joe Pug (The Ark)
Megan Mooney (A2 Comedy Showcase)
Keith Terry and the SLAMMIN All-Body Band Family Performance (UMS)

7
An Evening with Anthony Bourdain (Michigan Theater)
Greg Brown (The Ark)
OK Go with Princeton (The Blind Pig)
Debussy's Musique a Moi (UMMA)
Megan Mooney (A2 Comedy Showcase)
Gal Costa and Romero Lubambo (UMS)

8
From Shore to Shore: Music in the Key of Sea (Michigan Theater)
Shape Note Singing (The Ark)
The Jeremy Kittel Band CD Release Party (The Ark)
St. Lawrence String Quartet (UMS)

9
Ghostface Killah (The Blind Pig)

10
Mavis Staples (Michigan Theater)
Jucifer (The Blind Pig)

11
Keb' Mo' (Michigan Theater)
The Sins of Our Fathers (The Blind Pig)
John Hodgman (Borders)

12
Jake Shimabukuro (The Ark)
Javelins (The Blind Pig)
Bobby Tessel (A2 Comedy Showcase)

13
Student Songwriter Series: The Ark at UMMA (UMMA)
Enter the Haggis (The Ark)
The Macpodz (The Blind Pig)
Bobby Tessel (A2 Comedy Showcase)

14
Writers' Conference (Pioneer High School)
Souldub (The Blind Pig)
Seascapes: Exploring the Horizon (UMMA)
Bobby Tessel (A2 Comedy Showcase)
Yasmin Levy (UMS)

15
The Chenille Sisters with Ariel & Zoey (Michigan Theater)
Four Bitchin' Babes (The Ark)

17
Devendra Banhart (The Ark)
Brother Ali (The Blind Pig)
Berliner Philharmoniker (UMS)

18
The Asylum Street Spankers (The Ark)
Mass Solo Revolt (The Blind Pig)

19
Frank Vignola and the Hot Club of Detroit (The Ark)
The Wall Clocks CD Release Party (The Blind Pig)
Projectorhead Series: 24 City (UMMA)
Christmas Carol'd – Through 12/27 (Performance Network Theater)
Michael Loftus (A2 Comedy Showcase)

20
Old Crow Medicine Show (Michigan Theater)
Carrie Rodriguez (The Ark)
Dirty Americans (The Blind Pig)
Michael Loftus (A2 Comedy Showcase)
Patti LuPone (UMS)

21
Willy Porter & Luke Doucet
Nickie P. CD Release Party (The Blind Pig)
Michael Loftus (A2 Comedy Showcase)

22
aPOPScalypse (Michigan Theater)
Bill Harley (The Ark)

23
Blind Pilot (The Ark)

25
Great Lakes Myth Society (The Blind Pig)

27
Matt Watroba (The Ark)
The Blue Rubys (The Blind Pig)

28
Jeff Daniels & Friends (Michigan Theater)
Jacob Rosen Gets Handsy – WSG Malt Liquor (Your House)
Mr. B DVD Release Party (The Ark)
Guy Davis (Vault of Midnight)

29
Gemini and the Good Mischief Band (The Ark)
Heywood Banks (A2 Comedy Showcase)
Vienna Boys Choir (UMS)

December

2
The Swell Season (Michigan Theater)
Themselves (The Blind Pig)
Jay Fosgitt (Vault of Midnight)

3
Beit Habubot (The Blind Pig)
Southeast Michigan Salon (UMMA)
Dan Grueter (A2 Comedy Showcase)

4
And Evening with Frank Warren (Michigan Theater)
Ann Arbor Soul Club (The Blind Pig)
The Ark at UMMA Student Songwriter Series (UMMA)
Dan Grueter (A2 Comedy Showcase)

5
Lisa Lampanelli (Michigan Theater)
NOMO (The Blind Pig)
Sounds of Architecture (UMMA)
Dan Grueter (A2 Comedy Showcase)
Handel's Messiah (UMS)

6
Handel's Messiah (UMS)

10
Horace H. B. Sanders (A2 Comedy Showcase)

11
Artist Talk: Heather Rowe (UMMA)
Horace H. B. Sanders (A2 Comedy Showcase)

12
Raekwon the Chef (The Blind Pig)
Horace H. B. Sanders (A2 Comedy Showcase)
Jean-Yves Thibaudet (UMS)

16
Allyn Ball(A2 Comedy Showcase)

17
Allyn Ball(A2 Comedy Showcase)

18
Allyn Ball(A2 Comedy Showcase)
Lightworks (Nat. Sci. Auditorium)

19
Tickled Fancy Burlesque Co. (The Blind Pig)
Lightworks (Nat. Sci. Auditorium)

31
The Bang! (The Blind Pig)
New Year's Eve with Willie Barcena (A2 Comedy Showcase)

January

8
Souad Massi (UMS)

22
Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company (UMS)

26
Menopause, the Musical (Michigan Theater)

27
Bluebeard's Castle - Chicago Symphony Orchestra (UMS)

31
Ladysmith Black Mambazo (UMS)

Gargoyle Recommends...

Anthony Bourdain at the Michigan Theater

November 7, 8:00 PM

Anthony Bourdain is a badass chef. We really liked FOX's *Kitchen Confidential*. That was about him.

OK Go at The Blind Pig

November 7, 9:00 PM

OK Go is a pretty cool band, and the *Gargoyle* is going to be there interviewing them before this concert, so you'll likely run into a few staffers there. If anything, come for the chance to meet *Garg* VIPs.

Ghostface Killah at The Blind Pig

November 9, 9:30 PM

If ODB were alive, he'd recommend this.

John Hodgman at Borders

November 11, 7:00 PM

Best known (perhaps unfortunately) as the PC in Apple's "I'm A Mac" campaign, Hodgman has written two hilarious books documenting his knowledge of completely untrue information. He and his frequent partner in crime, Jonathan Coulton, have made a huge impact on contemporary nerd culture.

Keb' Mo' at the Michigan Theater

November 11, 7:30 PM

Delta blues by way of South Central perfected over thirty years.

Jake Shimabukuro at The Ark

November 12, 8:00 PM

Shimabukuro's ukulele stylings inspired notoriously lazy *Garg* staffer Adrian Choy to purchase a uke and briefly attempt to learn how to play it.

Devendra Banhart at The Ark

November 17, 8:00 PM

Banhart is exceptionally weird, deliberately lo-fi, sports a badass beard, and dated Natalie Portman. Need we say more?

Brother Ali at The Blind Pig

November 17, 9:30 PM

Brother Ali has got the beats with which Adrian Choy thinks you can't compete. Otha playas be hatin', but I just be celebratin'. Brother Ali is the show for thee.

Old Crow Medicine Show at the Michigan Theater

November 20, 8:00 PM

Zack's parents saw them last year at the Ann Arbor Folk Festival and really liked them.

Guy Davis at Vault of Midnight

November 28, 6:00 PM

He is are draw a good Hellboy (comix). OK?

Jeff Daniels & Friends at the Michigan Theater

November 28, 8:00 PM

Y'ever been to Chelsea? He has a theater. He likes Michigan. He's the Winter Commencement speaker. He's a cool guy.

Matt Watroba at The Ark

November 27, 8:00 PM

His daughters went to school with two of our staffers. He used to sing protest songs to the elementary school students and has a lot of amazing stories. An awesome guy who knows everything about the music industry.

The Swell Season at the Michigan Theater

December 2, 7:30 PM

The musical collaboration between Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglová that sprang from the indie Irish film *Once* has transmutated into The Swell Season. Hansard's songwriting is fantastic, sweet, and heartbreaking along with Irglová's harmonizing and musicianship.

Lightworks at Nat. Sci. Auditorium

December 18/19 6:00 PM

Lightworks is the semesterly film festival where Screen Arts majors show off their variously entertaining and/or successful final projects. They range from impressive to hilarious to terrible. Whichever, they're generally pretty entertaining.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo at Hill Auditorium

January 31, 4:00 PM

This canonical South African group has made an indelible mark on the history of twentieth century popular music, from Paul Simon to *The Lion King*. Also, there was a pretty good SNL sketch about them once.

time to read a CLOCK

BIG HAND NOW

LATER

LITTLE HAND

out of time

just in time

rock o'clock

the hour of our LORD

that time again

big time

Bruce Willis

that time

about that time

tool time

hammer time

prime time

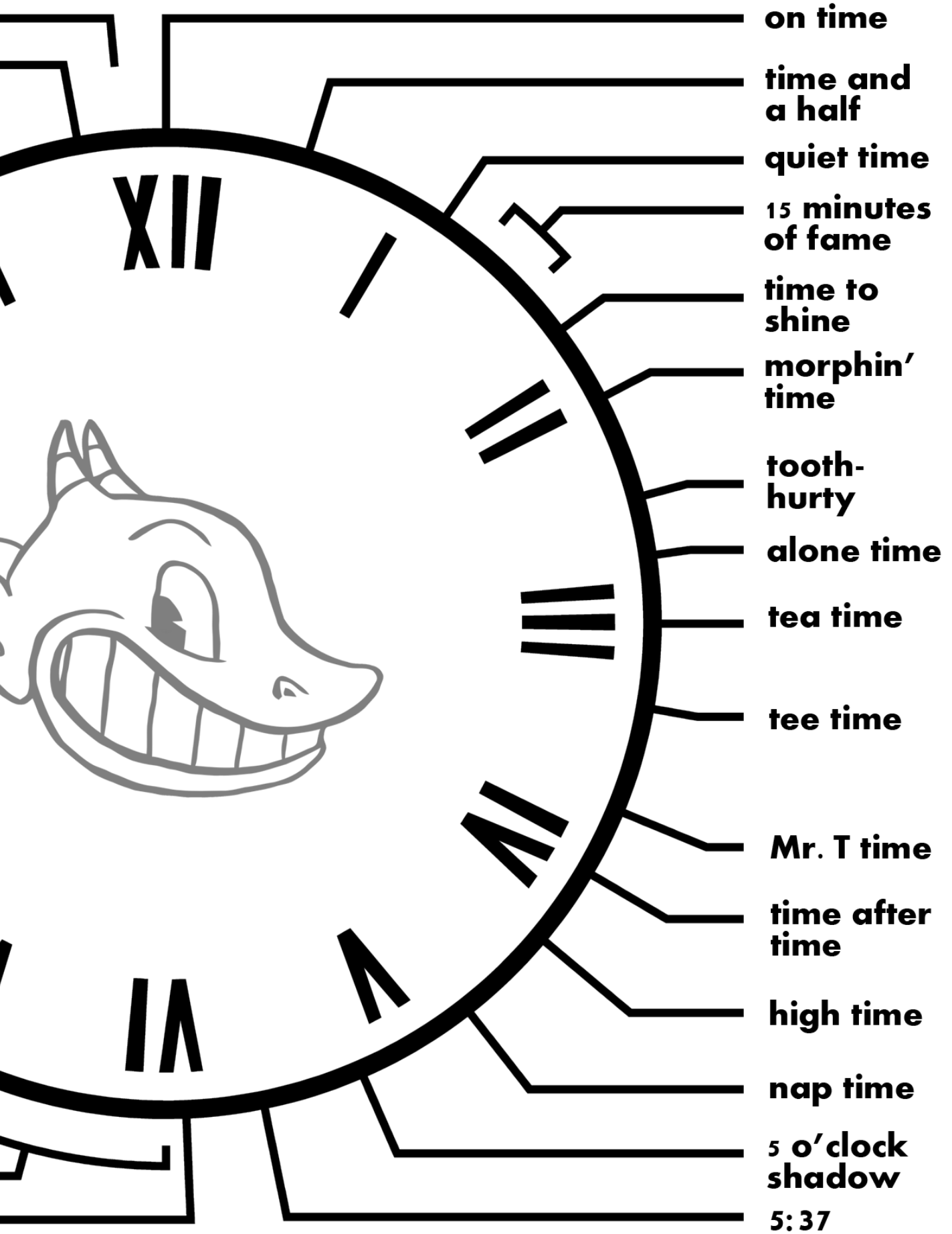
mountain time

time to get a watch

thyme

happy hour

beer: 30


XII
on time
time and a half
quiet time
15 minutes of fame
time to shine
morphin' time
tooth-hurty
alone time
tea time
tee time
Mr. T time
time after time
high time
nap time
5 o'clock shadow
5:37

The Sad, Sad Tale of a Filet-O-Fish Sandwich

By Ben Schlanger

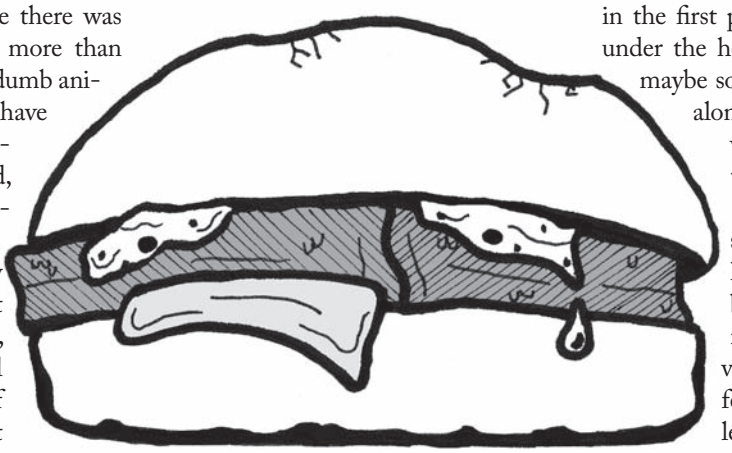
As I lay here under the heat lamp, I reflect on my past life, and I can't help but shed a tear from wherever my eye is. I have become a grotesque abomination, and for no purpose other than to assure Catholics that McDonald's doesn't discriminate against their Lenten practices.

There was a time before all this though, a time when I swam the depths of the sea with my school of fish friends. A time where I ate whatever filth the travelers on the ferry threw into the water. It was a carefree time. I regretted nothing, mainly because there was nothing I remembered for more than thirty seconds. I truly was a dumb animal. Yet now that my eyes have been opened to the true horrors that I have experienced, I truly understand that ignorance is bliss.

Or rather, that was only about a third of my past life, as I, a Filet-O-Fish, am only about 30% actual fish meat. The other 70% of me came from a compost heap. Though I was a stinking pile of egg shells, rotten fruit, and other unmentionables, I held my head high (metaphorically of course, as a compost heap does not actually have a head), because I always knew that one day I would be scattered upon the earth, and from me would blossom a beautiful harvest.

Tragically, all of that was taken from me when an entrepreneurial Vietnamese couple decided to convert their VHS rental shop into a McDonald's franchise. I was taken from my home in the sea and thrown onto a ship, the *S.S. Flipper*, where I lay for days, gasping for a breath of water. Around me were the bodies of my fallen marine-mammal brethren, fit only for a can of tuna-safe dolphin.

Then came the processing plant. I may not be a fish of the Good Book, nor have I led the purest fish life, but I surely did not deserve the hell that I endured in that wretched place. I am not too familiar with Dante or that *Inferno* of his, but I assure you that even he would have been shocked with the atrocities that go on in there. I entered a fish, and I emerged a hideous brick of indistinguishable Lord-knows-what.



And so I lay in this ghastly state at the bottom of the freezer. It was a pleasant cryogenic purgatory compared to the processing plant. I grew accustomed to this, existed peacefully, believing this to be my fishy fate for all eternity. I would forever be undisturbed in my little freezer-burn-ridden corner of the freezer, since no one ever orders the Filet-O-Fish. No one ever has, and no one ever will.

Unfortunately, that was not enough to save me from what was to come. I don't blame the customer for what happened, since he had done nothing wrong. I don't even blame the cashier, even though it was all her fault. I'm sure that in whatever kind of convoluted illegal-immigrant version of English she had learned, "10-piece McNuggets" translates to "I'd like a fish sandwich, please."

And so I was ripped from my happy little nook and throw into the industrial microwave, where I was nuked for twenty seconds. I was then stuffed between two buns made of what I'm fairly certain is not wheat, but factory-refined leaves and dried up Christmas trees. All this, only to discover that I was never wanted in the first place. And so I was placed under the heat lamp, in the hope that maybe someday, someone will come along and order me, and they will be pleasantly surprised to find me already prepared.

It has been a year now since that hopeful day, and here I still lay under the burning heat lamp. I am now a dried-up mass devoid of any hope, and I can feel a little bit of my soul leave me every day. Don't worry though; I'm still fresh enough to eat. I've been packed so full of preservatives that I could survive a nuclear winter. Long after all civilization passes away, I will remain, along with the cockroaches, for even they have the sense to distinguish me from anything that could reasonably be considered food.

And so I beg of you, somebody, anybody, please end my existence. Please, just chew me, swallow me, and squeeze me out the other end. Only then will I finally be released from this prison. Only then can I finally fly to the great big fish pond in the sky.

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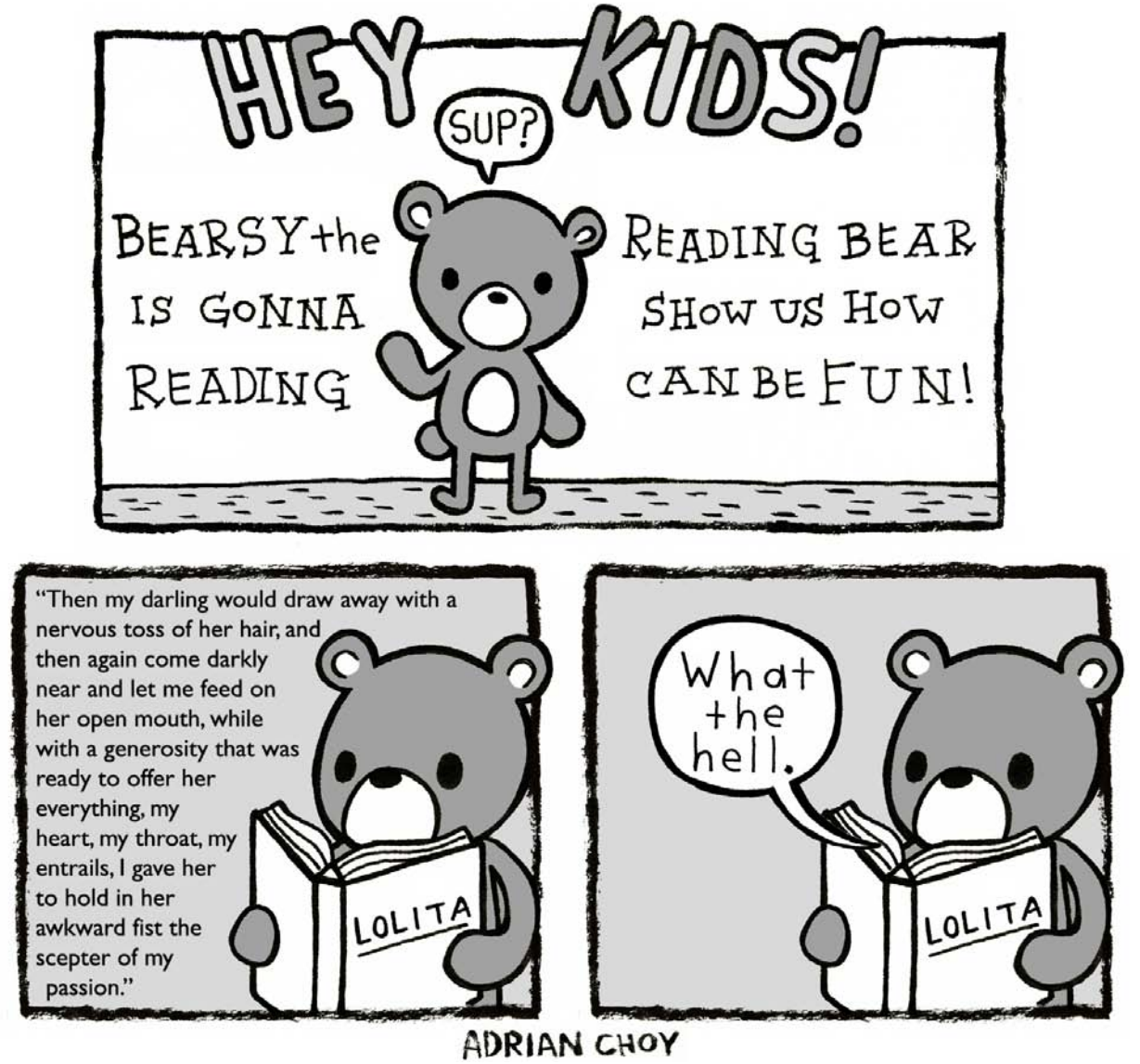

HEY KIDS!
SUP?
BEARSY the READING BEAR IS GONNA SHOW US HOW READING CAN BE FUN!
"Then my darling would draw away with a nervous toss of her hair, and then again come darkly near and let me feed on her open mouth, while with a generosity that was ready to offer her everything, my heart, my throat, my entrails, I gave her to hold in her awkward fist the scepter of my passion."
LOLITA
What the hell.
LOLITA
ADRIAN CHOY

Soviet Horror

By Rob Davis

[Read in thick Russian accent]
One night, hard-working party member and wife leave for worker's union party. Leave baby children with honest party member childwatcher.

Efficient Soviet phone ring late at night. No one talk on line. Is breathing. Childwatcher call Glorious Soviet Communications Infrastructure of the People. Noble operator say, "Call is from inside house come." Childwatcher is scared.

Secret Police come. Childwatcher and babychilds sent to Gulag.

One day Soviet boy come home is. Pass party-owned book store. Is see fun interesting propaganda book. Is excite. Ask glorious comrade bookmaster how much is book. "Three potato," answer glorious comrade bookmaster. Bookmaster is warn, "Never read last page." Boy take book to efficient state run glorious apartment block. No light to read book. Is dark.

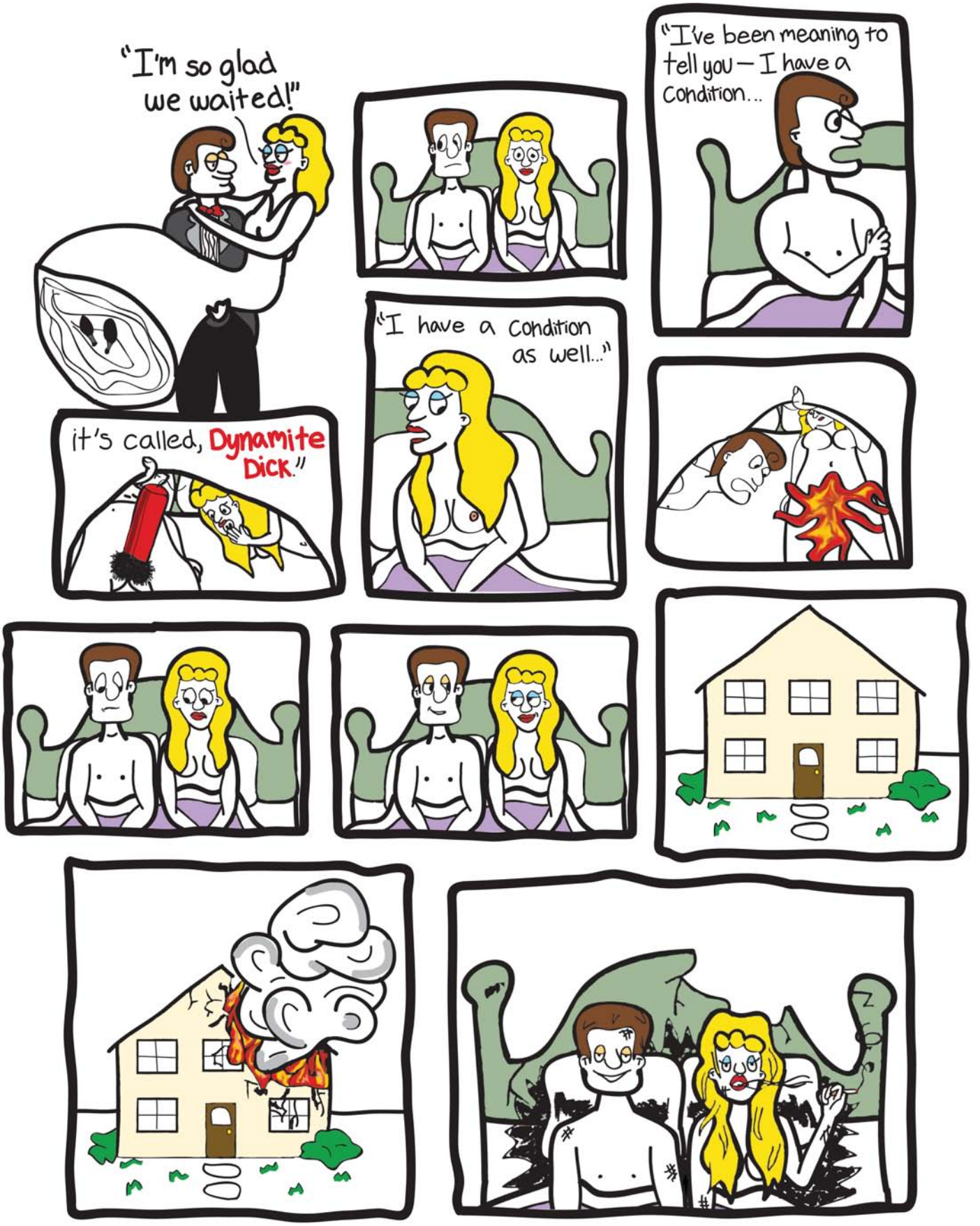
Next day boy read book. Forget bookmaster warning. Read last page. "RETAIL PRICE: ONE POTATO." Is scared. Boy and family send to Siberia.

Father is in sleep in home. Drink wodka. Daughter awake, drink wodka, declare bad dream is having. Father say, "Return to your sleeping. Take warm glass of wodka. Help sleep, comrade." Daughter say, "In dream, I return to efficient Soviet bed. Then monster wearing grandmother's skin begin to move." Father say, "Do not speak of sister like that. We can afford no coats. This you know. Such is life in Moskva."

Potato farmer hear report on glorious and efficient Soviet radio of escaped party enemy attack noble Soviet farmers in area. Man drink wodka and stare at potato field. See strange man staring back. Farmer drink more wodka, step closer. Man has also move closer. Drop wodka in surprise.

Notice no footprints in mud. Is reflection! Farmer is beaten with potatoes. Body is sent to Gulag for twenty years. Farm is bulldozed for glorious and efficient tractor factory.

CHEETO
FINGERS



By Samantha Nash

The Regina Monologues

By Jacob Rosen

In yet another successful attempt to remain celibate, I accompanied my fifteen-year-old sister to the Regina Spektor concert on September 15th at the Michigan Theater. I spotted some acquaintances there, although much to my surprise they were all either female or gay. We took our seats after spending twenty dollars on peanut M&M's, only to be serenaded by a group that goes by the name of Little Joy. Contrary to its title, this band brought somewhere between a moderate and large amount of joy to me and my fellow listeners. The harmony was very tasteful, and the band seemed to be having fun the whole time. Even though I was literally biting through my lip in anticipation of Regina, I managed to enjoy the opener. Usually with big names like Regina Spektor there are jeers from the crowd, but there was not a jeer in ear sight. I thoroughly enjoyed Little Joy. If you're looking to endorse a relatively unknown band which your friends haven't heard of, buy their shit with your parents' credit card.

I accosted Little Joy in the graffiti alley while they were smoking a very relaxing-looking cigarette. After anxiously dry heaving for a minute and a half, I congratulated them on a great show and asked them the two worst questions I could think of at the moment. I don't know how they started playing with Regina, or even where they're from, but I do know that they like Brian Lebarton, and their favorite of the seven dwarfs are Sleepy, Grouchy and Sneezy.

All good things must end, and in this case they brought something even better. From the moment Regina came on stage the audience was fixated on her adorable face. I had at least a half of a boner for the vast majority of the show. The kind of attraction I feel towards Regina isn't the average "I would fuck you so hard right now" feeling. Regina is classy, and I couldn't even fathom having sex with her until I asked her hand in marriage, which I intend to do as soon as I can find a wedding ring under fifteen dollars. I couldn't listen to her without hating myself for not living inside her vocal chords. And wouldn't you believe it, they had a real live pianoforte!

When Regina Spektor sang, the world listened. For just a moment, I could hear a hawk sparing a defenseless rodent its life, Palestinians and Israelis putting down their weapons and Nazis rolling over in their graves. While she was playing piano, I cried. When she switched to the electric keyboard, I sobbed. And during the electric guitar solo part, I just didn't even know what to do with myself. As she approached the audience, I noticed her size. Who knew that someone with such a small body could make such enormous sounds?! I sure didn't.

After the show, I waited for her autograph. The security officers told me to wait for fifteen minutes, and she would be right out. An hour an a half later, Regina approached me with a sharpie and a smile. As she signed, I asked her if she had ever had a total eclipse of the heart. She then absentmindedly told me to watch the literal version of "Total Eclipse of the Heart" on YouTube, and walked off to her next admirer. With most other people, I'd be angry upon receiving such an irrelevant answer, but with Regina Spektor, it was nothing but charming.

All in all it was a great show. I'd do it all over again, but I would bring an extra pair of pants because I wet myself before the show. Then again after the show. I would recommend both artists to anyone that knows anything.

YOU'RE ON IN FIVE MR. EFRON!
THEY CANCELLED HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL: THE PORNO!
TABLOID
BOUNCE! BOUNCE!
ZAC... IT'S YOUR TURN...
ALISA M.

The Iron Virgin of Michigan

By Jordan Birnholtz

"New Yorkers are everywhere, and if you are not careful, they will kill and flay and cure you, and you will become a pair of Ugg boots." The Iron Virgin dabbed warpaint beneath her horn-rimmed glasses.

"But how can you see if they're coming?"

"It's not so hard." The Iron Virgin, as Mary Sue Coleman was known to some, inhaled. The stench of Natural Light hung wistfully in the air. "If it's a male specimen, the most important sign to look for is that which cannot be seen. You must listen."

"But what should I listen for?" Jimmy was from Petoskey and unfamiliar with these things.

Mary Sue paused, eyeing her longbow. Someone, or some New Yorker, had chipped a bit of hardwood off the shaft. "Tell me Jimmy," she asked Jimmy, "what does the New Yorker sound like to you?"

Jimmy shrugged in that way that people from suburbs think is endearing. "Aw, shucks," he shucked. "I don't know. I don't want to generalize, or stereotype people."

"It's okay. This is Michigan."

"Well, there is this one phrase."

"And what is it?" They were alone, and buried deep underground. When the graduate stacks fell to the zombie horde in March, Mary Sue moved the University operations to the old munitions plant tucked under the Alpha Delta Phi volleyball court.

Jimmy coughed and Mary Sue reached for her Hwandudaedo. "What was that?"

Jimmy was concerned about the obscure Korean battle sword that was now held to his neck by the buff president.

"I'm sorry."

"That's not an answer!" She drew the tip of her blade to the tip of his dick. "Are you one of them?"

"Well, no, I don't think–"

"Don't metatextualize your response or I will destroy you and grind your genitals into medicinal powder!"

"No! I'm asthmatic!"

The Iron Virgin lowered her weapon. She inhaled with great strain. Her septum was terribly deviated. Speed and coke were the only ways to survive the long nights, which arced into jarred and hollow mornings. "Well?"

"The first thing I usually hear is 'Hugitout.'" It was well-established by those in what remained of the medical center that this practice of hugitout was largely responsible for the spread of the Swine. "But by the time I hear that, it's almost too late."

The Iron Virgin stroked her blade with a cloth. "That's keen of you to say. It's important to know what you don't know."

"So what should I do?"

"Be very attentive. As soon as you hear a reference to *Entourage*, run."

"What about *Big Love*?"

"It's good as well."

"You like the show?"

"No. I meant that it's a good indicator."

"Oh."

The walls began to vibrate, and the screws holding the GHB-storage vats began to loosen.

"Mary Sue, what's going on?"

"I don't know." She clutched her sword and bow. "Go over to the locker, and grab a spear. They might be coming." Mary Sue gestured at a wilted modular storage cabinet salvaged from the wreckage of Markley, varnished by the blood of a freshman in the N2 explosion that followed the Second Impact.

There was no spear, but Jimmy did find an old Soviet ballistic knife. Pocketing it, he looked up.

A GHB vat was coming down upon him in the most immediate sense. Suddenly, whether or not Jimmy existed in any sense beyond that which might be ascribed to being a belief of a logical atomist was entirely, utterly, and perfectly irrelevant.

Mary Sue launched an arrow across the room, with a heavy metal cable appended to its butt. The cable was wrapped around her muscular, bare, dead-sexy ankle.

The arrow embedded itself in a wall just as the container crossed the horizontal axis of its quasiparabolic flight-path. This horizontal axis was above Jimmy's head, much to his relief, and was demarcated by a heavy metal cable.

The cable became taut and stiff quickly. God, her ankle was sexy.

"Your ankle is beautiful."

"I know. Get out of there!"

Jimmy rolled out from under the rope. "Thank you, Madame President."

"I'd do anything for my University and my students, Jimmy."

His eyes lit up with eighteen years of sexual angst.

And then Michael Bloomberg destroyed her.

His organibionic fist descended from the ceiling, pushing through hundreds of feet of earth. And it crushed Mary Sue Coleman, and even her sexy ankle.

Jimmy was crushed, but only in the non-literal sense, which is to say he was not actually crushed at all, and just sort of disappointed in this perhaps functionally significant manner, but that remained to be seen by the narrator.

Jimmy was crushed in a totally literal sense when Bloomberg's enormous hand grabbed him and dragged him through to the surface.

Suddenly, Jimmy was staring into the visage of Michael Bloomberg's face, inflated five hundred times its natural size.

Michael Bloomberg was a giant fucking robot. Those in the know knew that he funded this transformation with the proceeds of his soft-drink tax.

"Now that I have saved New York

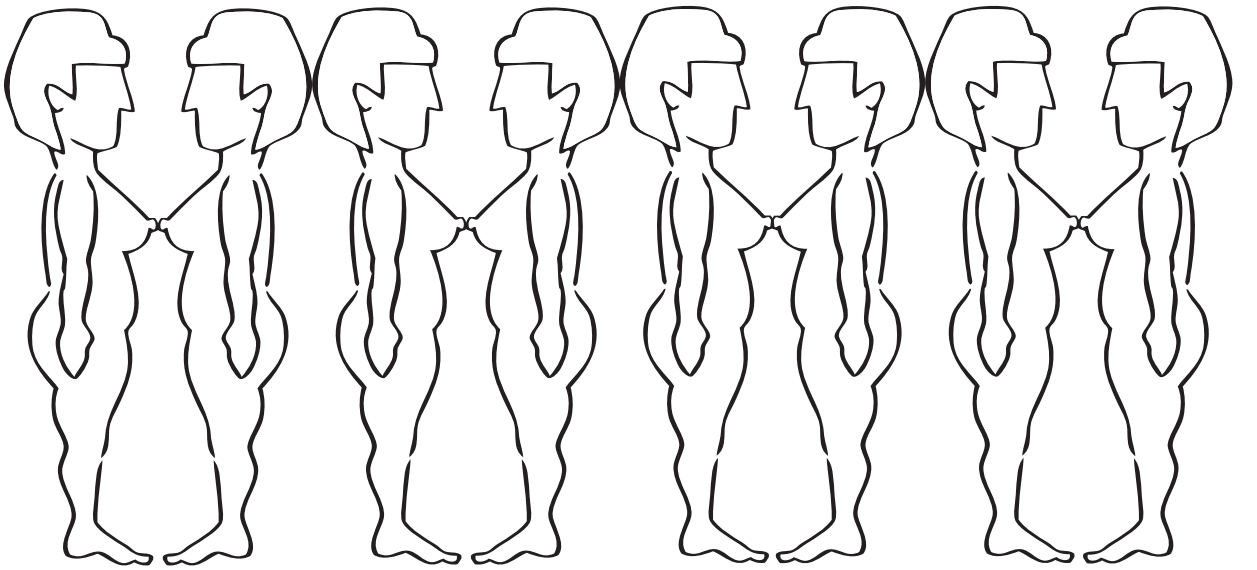
from soft drinks, and also New Yorkers themselves, I have come to save Ann Arbor from New York and the dreaded Swine." He squeezed Jimmy harder and he began to have an asthma attack.

Jimmy coughed. "Why did you kill her?" He was barely able to breath between Bloomberg's mighty phalanges and the autoimmune disorder that was causing him severe bronchial dilation.

Before Bloomberg could respond, the ballistic knife erupted out of Jimmy's pants and hit the mighty Jewish Arjuna in the eye.

His hand released Jimmy, who fell forty feet to the ground and died as his head was shattered by one of those stupid *art* bike racks.

Bloomberg fell to the ground with such force that all of Ann Arbor was destroyed in the shock-wave. Everyone and all of the New Yorkers left in it were killed as well, except for the guy who looks like Javier Bardem that hangs around Espresso Royale on State Street.



Candace

By Bill Hilzinger

"Hello, Candace!"

"Why, George! It's been years!"

"No it hasn't—you're my hostage and I've kept you here for months!"

"Oh, how silly of me. Of course! Say, these ropes are mighty nice, they keep me tied to this chair real good."

"I'm glad you think so! We'd hate to have you running away."

"Oh yes, I imagine it would be mighty difficult to harvest organs from someone who's run off!"

"Indeed it would be! It's happened before."

"Is that why I have the shock collar?"

"You guessed it! And why I cut off your feet!"

"I was wondering about that! Ha ha. I must have been in quite the drug coma for that one, eh?"

"Well, you woke up at one point, which is why the left shin is a bit uneven, but it was nothing a blunt wrench couldn't fix."

"Woke up? I'm so sorry! I don't even remember! Oh, that's awful of me, disturbing your work like that, just awful!"

"Well, forgive and forget—that's what I always say."

"Thanks George, that means a lot. Say, you don't have any more of that gruel left over from last night, do you?"

"I sure do! And that wasn't last night—it's been at least a week since I've fed you."

"Is that right? It's pitch black down here, you know—awful hard to tell how much time has passed."

"And I suppose the constant beatings don't help, either."

"Well, they just let me know that you haven't forgotten about me! It would be pretty lonely without all these rabid hyenas."

"Oh, the hyenas, I'd almost forgotten! They're in heat, too, you know—all of them female."

"I thought I sensed a woman's touch in their clawing. Look! The maul-marks on my left side match those on the right!"

"Isn't that the darndest thing. Aren't animals fascinating?"

"It's a beautiful world we live in, George, a beautiful world indeed."

"You sure are right, Candace. Well, I'm gonna head back upstairs—you have a good one, okay?"

"Sure thing, George. You too!"

Circus

By Stuart VandenBrink

It sounded like a good idea at the time. It wasn't.

I was sitting in the atrium of the math department, furiously scribbling down formulas and tables of integrals. My honors modern differential number theory exam was in an hour, and I was far from ready. I wiped the sweat that was pouring down my brow at a rate proportional to my hatred of the class, and looked up at Felix. He was staring at his thumbnails, his brain obviously fried. Maybe he was just trying to help me out by bringing down the curve. That's a true friend, but not such a good study partner.

He looked up from his cuticles and squinted at me. "Fuck this shit! We should run off and join the circus!"

"Are you crazy, Felix? You crazy?" I crossed my eyes, shook my head, and jabbed his solar-plexus.

"Me?" Felix was indignant. "You're the one who's trying to figure out what the concentration of Solution A will be at time *t* after passing through n buckets of Solution B. That doesn't strike you as just a little bit crazy?"

"It could be useful if, you know, maybe there's a, something that, post-apocalyptic...you know?" I was grabbing for a reason that wasn't there, so I relaxed my hand and put my arm back on the table.

"No, I don't know," he stated flatly. "Look, you're working yourself up over something that's not fun, not important, and frankly is taking away from our time that could be spent swinging from a trapeze."

He was right, and we both knew it. I stood up and started putting my book and papers into my backpack. Felix slapped my face.

"What are you doing?" He asked. He got up from his side of the table, walked around, and grabbed my math book from me. "You don't need these anymore. Not where we're going."

"What, you want to just leave our stuff here and go right now?"

"Yes." We walked out of the atrium with nothing but our clothes, foolish ambitions, and a very incomplete understanding of number theory. We walked, and walked, and then skipped a little bit to break up the monotony, and then walked. Thirty miles later, we found the circus.

Marvelous sights and sounds filled the air. There were men on stilts, cotton candy on sticks, and teenagers on hallucinogens. The big top loomed in the back with its bold red and white stripes.

"I'm thirsty, and kinda hungry," I said, turning to Felix. "I also don't have any money."

"Fuck you! You have a $50 bill in your wallet that you just got for your birthday."

"Yeah, but I don't want to break it."

Felix rolled his eyes. "How about you earn your food?" He clapped his hands twice and yelled, "Carnie!"

There was a sound of a thousand peanut shells being crunched, and a stout little carnie appeared before us in a cloud of flash powder. "Your wish is my swindle," he said with an air of confidence and a compelling wink of his eye.

Felix cleared his throat. "My friend and I have come here to join the circus." He had obviously done this before. He knew just what to say.

The carnie undressed Felix with his eyes, admiring his slender build and toned muscles. Then he looked over at me, his eyes briefly passing over my second nose and bioluminescent lips. "How do you feel about being in a freak show, boy?"

I shifted my weight and looked down at my webbed feet. "I -- I don't think that would really be the best use of my talents," I started to explain.

"Not you, your friend here!" He guffawed a mighty guffaw. "His eyebrows are peculiar. There's no gap between them! Look at them – it's freaky! Freaky-deaky, almost! Definitely more than freakish-weakish, though."

Felix was on the verge of tears at this point. "You really think so? You think I have a unibrow?"

"Sure ya do, my boy. And a fine one at that!" He put his arm around Felix's shoulders and they started to walk away, engulfing my friend in a smell that he would later describe as "worse than that time I ate a Baconator, ran ten miles, and then threw up in my shoe."

"What about me?" I yelled. "Do I get to do something?"

The carnie looked over his soldier and called back at me. "Does a porcupine float?"

I thought about it for a moment. I've never held a porcupine without screaming loudly while trying to pull it out of my forehead, so I didn't really have a good idea of what their specific density was.

Sensing my hesitancy, the carnie rudely decrypted his message before I had a chance to. "They sure do, son. Stick with me an you'll learn a lot. Come, follow me to my office."

We followed the carnie past the caramel apple stands, past the elephant ears, between the four deep-fried Twinkie stands, and to a small spacecraft that was omitting an annoying high-pitched ring.

"Here we are! Step inside and let's go for a spin!" The carnie smiled, as he tried to pull the door open, even though it was clearly marked "kroomp."

Felix sneezed.

I thought back to the advice my mother had given me in the eleventh grade: don't ride in strangers' cars and don't take candy from them. I mulled over my options. The spaceship technically wasn't a car, and we hadn't been offered candy...

"I have candy in here, too!" the carnie added.

"Say no more!" Felix exclaimed, pushing the carnie out of the way and the door open. I followed suit and pushed the carnie even farther out of the way, then walked through the door.

Once inside the spaceship, I couldn't see anything because the carnie sprayed us with mace. I writhed around on the ground, getting my new khaki pants all dirty, while Felix complained loudly about his eyes. The carnie would hear none of it.

"Silence!" he demanded. "I will hear none of this!"

And he never did.

Family Values

By Rob Davis

MARK: Hey Dan, are you going to come out with us tonight? I haven't seen you leave the room since you moved in.

DANIEL: Nah, y'know, I've got a lot of work to get through before Monday.

MARK: Bullshit, classes haven't started. You just sit in the corner, on your computer all day. You gotta show me what's more interesting than going out and taking advantage of freshmen, bro.

DANIEL: Look, you wouldn't think it was that great anyway. I'll go out with you guys next weekend, I ju—

MARK: Oh man, now you're all secretive! C'mon c'mon c'mon, give it here…

MARK: So let's see what you like so much… what the fuck is this? Two hundred and seventy gigs of… family portraits?

DANIEL: I knew you wouldn't understand, Mark. Isn't it obvious, though?

MARK: No.

DANIEL: It's the family, man. The nuclear family. Do you see, now? A mom, a dad, the kid. Maybe twins. Shit, I love twins. Dads playing catch with their sons. Family barbecues. The raw, animalistic desire for companionship. So much deeper, more visceral than your "sex" with girls. So much more real. God, Mark, have you seen those ads for the Wii? The whole family can play at the same time. Do you understand the importance of that?

MARK: Yeah, I, uh, really like Wii Tennis too, I think.

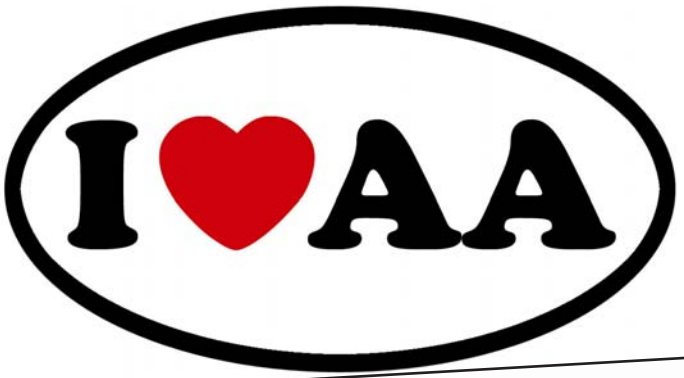
DANIEL: Once again you miss the point, Mark. The raw sexual energy of a family. Happy. Together. Enjoying each other's company. Do you remember the last time your family had dinner together, Mark?

MARK: Shit, probably like Thanksgivi—

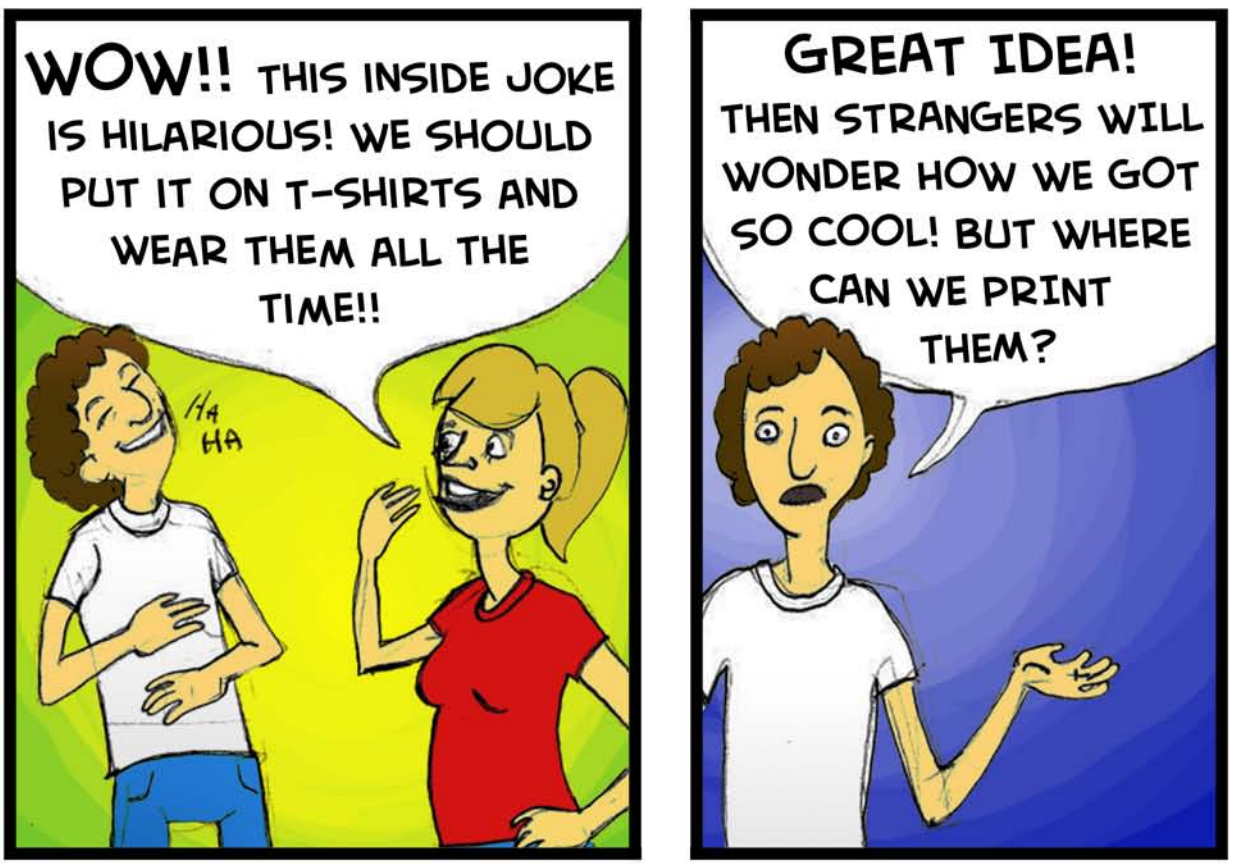
DANIEL: *No, Mark*. No. You and your fixation on vaginas and liquor and girls. You don't understand. You won't understand. Leave me alone with my families. All of them. You Philistine.

Unsuccessful Bumper Stickers

By Zack Beauvais
Adrian Choy
Cathy Fisher
and Jacob Rosen



HAS THIS EVER HAPPENED TO YOU?


WOW!! THIS INSIDE JOKE IS HILARIOUS! WE SHOULD PUT IT ON T-SHIRTS AND WEAR THEM ALL THE TIME!!
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Horse Cave, Kentucky

By Kevin Bauer

Night.

A derelict town of people who wish to fade into obscurity. I type from an aging two-story motel that its new Indian owners wish to revive in order to compete with the Hampton Hotel just across the narrow country road. My parents have just finished playing a game of Skip-Bo.

I came back earlier in the evening from an impromptu driving adventure to an ancient strip mall; two long buildings hollowed out of their businesses. Paper Factory. Dollar Wizard. Variety Store. Even a forgotten strip club.

I peered into the latter's windows, past the posters of women far too hot to exist anywhere other than the Florida Keys and the sweaty imaginations of a pimply comic book nerds. Brunettes and blondes. A cheerleader, number 69. How quaint. And inside? Only blackness. Almost a hollow reverberation. My imagination stirs with recently-ancient mystical horrors. A dancer looking to give one last macabre dance. Poles that call out for ownership. An unfathomable article of clothing found in the cobwebbed dressing rooms. A withered husk of a VIP, dollar bills slipping from mummy hands. Perhaps each nightmare rolled together like a slimy burrito.

I'd be so lucky.

Strangely, an adult book store is still in business.

"ADULT BOOK STORE."

The shopkeep, a bloated man with a buzzcut, told me that I could buy two DVDs for $19.99 and expect a third free. He didn't like me, but that could be attributed to Adult Book Store workers' universal contempt of their clients. Or that I was a Michigan Yankee in a town I would never, ever understand.

Desiring neither "Water Melons" with Gianna Michaels or "A Day In Paris" with Paris Hilton, I left without any particular regret.

Lynyrd Skynrd seemed the ticket. "Free Bird" played just loudly enough in my mother's Taurus to drown out my terrible singing.

Another remnant—the Food Mart gas station and convenience store. Dim back-up lights illuminated the evicerated shelves, bread counter, and fountain drink dispenser. Dirt, leaves, and a neglected broom on the linoleum. Teal electronic numbers misted digitally from fossilized gas pumps: 100,000, 354,721, 959,275…

Nothing more.

Even McDonald's was on an adjacent road.

I drove to a serviceable gas station/convenience store/restaurant not far down the road. The woman at the counter asked her Indian associate five times if she should leave the corn out for him. I asked him how long he'd been in town, how long the outpost had been crumbling, et cetera, et cetera?

I never asked why he left southern California; twisty country roads like this are only good for losing yourself.

I spoke with him until his accent rendered him insensible. This happened quickly.

Outside the motel, a man with a Hulk Hogan mustache smoked Salems by the RC Cola machine. A long way from his native Texas, he was hopping over the state with his wife, a geologist interested in finding the family burial grounds. He got bored when she went to the libraries. Which was incessantly. He perked up when I mentioned the Adult Book Store. I don't really blame him.

End adventures with coconut cake.

Everything in the Eagle's Lodge Restaurant had a price tag on it, even the buffet bar. Pasty food that roughly shared the same taste. I hefted a hay saw, a three-foot steak knife with sickle handles. Corn crunchers. Antique ovens. A butter roller excellent for starting conversations, so please buy it.

Our waitress only liked us when I spilled my barbeque sauce.

Like every woman I encountered, she was barrel-shaped with a voluptuous face that would not be unpleasant to kiss. Round, glassy doll eyes. Unreality.

The men all stood stooped in white undershirts—transparent tank tops revealing their man-breasts. Sunken eyes watched from brutish faces.

The two Indian people didn't count.

Evidently, there was also an Amish man performing various works of handimanship. My dad caught him carrying a ladder and invited me to walk back and stare. I later saw him strolling about with the ladder. I suppose he's very keen on that ladder.

…I don't think I can draw a conclusion without sounding trite.

The air conditioner clatters and clanks. The bathroom swelters under a phallic heat lamp.

I shiver and I feel something akin to love.

Coke Zero Max Extreme

By Peter Eldred

Man 1: Hi, I'm Steve.

(Pause)

Man 1: I said, "Hi, I'm Steve."

(Pause)

Man 1: That's my name. Steve.

Man 2: I heard you the first time, but we're at urinals here. This is against etiquette. And creepy—Christ! No! Don't try to shake my hand! I can still hear both our streams!

Man 1: I'm sorry friend. I just wanted you to have a look at this. This right here. What's coming out.

Man 2: I don't think I want to do that.

Man 1: Oh yes, you do! It's incredible!

Man 2: Well it can't be that incre—My lord! Is that soda pop that you're pissing?

Man 1: Naturally.

Man 2: How the hell did you do that?

Man 1: It's quite simple. I drank Coke Zero Max Extreme.

Man 2: Coke Zero Max Extreme?

Man 1: You heard right, friend! Coke Zero Max Extreme has the same smooth taste as classic Coca-Cola, but we've jammed so many chemicals in it that your body doesn't know what the hell to do with it! So it just flows right out, untouched, as nature intended.

Man 2: Is that dangerous?

Man 1: Why would it be?

Man 2: Well, I don't know! It must be safe!

Man 1: Safe? Hell, it's healthy, even. Probably. No calories, no residual chemicals, and I'm willing to bet a bottle that there won't even be any birth defects cropping up for those pregnant mothers out there!

Man 2: Well, I'm sold!

Man 1: But that's not all! You haven't heard the most exciting part! Coke Zero Max Extreme is reusable! That means it saves water. No more flushing! Just bottle it up and you're ready to drink it again!

Man 2: Wowzers! It saves the environment too? The R&D department at Coca-Cola must have been bitten by super-smart radioactive spiders to think of an idea like that! I'll bet they climb walls too, don't they? But hey! Why are you using the urinal then?

Man 1: Oh, I'm glad you asked. I'm not using the urinal at all, Phillip. In fa—

Man 2: I never told you my name wa—

Man 1: Quiet, Phillip! Be grateful.

Man 2: Why?

Man 1: Because I just bottled you… a free sample!

Man 2: Hooray for Coke Zero Max Extreme!

Man 1: No, Phillip. Hooray for the planet!

**Coke Zero Max Extreme not sold in California, Maryland†, or North Dakota.*
†Designated a narcotic substance in Maryland.

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MayhemFest 2009

By Danielle Woerdeman

Despite its reputation, Bristow, VA is actually an interesting place. Actually, that's not true at all. But for one day this summer, its Nissan Pavilion held the most exquisite concert I have ever seen. The festival lasted all day, and its title, MayhemFest, accurately describes the pure, unadulterated chaos that filled the grounds. It brought together the likes of Marilyn Manson, Slayer, Killswitch Engage, Job for a Cowboy, Cannibal Corpse, Black Dahlia Murder, God Forbid, Behemoth, Whitechapel, and over 20 others. What a spectacle! I was compelled to compose a review, and I have decided to provide you loyal readers with a few highlights.

Before the concert even began, I met the most lovely and intriguing woman. She introduced herself as Charise, a dancer for Marilyn Manson. Before we even began our conversation, I was taken aback by her bold ensemble. It was quite risqué, yet somehow not out of place in the 7-11 bathroom. She had on an intricate black bustier with lace trim, matching panties, and a delightfully ruffled ribbon of fabric around her waist (she referred to it as a skirt). She was a little wobbly in her 4-inch heels, but who can blame her? There had to be at least 250 pounds of her, which is a lot to carry around. The numerous metal rings in her face gleamed in the sunlight as I helped her stagger to her car. She, like most, had already begun the "liquid festivities," and the doors weren't to open until 12:30pm. I waved as she swerved off, made a mental note to look for her among the dancers, and made my way to the long line of concert-goers.

A headlining band, Bullshit For My Valentine, (their more well-known name, Bullet For My Valentine, is actually an incorrect translation from the Spanish) was truly a sight to see. The Venezuelan quartet has all but perfected the "inexplicably angry rich white boy" look in only a few years of living in the U.S. Backstage, while showing off their new "tats," they informed me the look was a necessary precaution since they are in fact illegal immigrants. I have since informed the INS.

The act was quite a spectacle. By replicating an ancient Mayan tradition, they enacted what they termed "interspecies erotica." Of course, like the rest of their material, that was stolen from *Clerks II*. In a surprise move, they brought a live bull onstage during their unrequested encore. As eyes started to widen, a scantily clad woman approached the bull from behind. To my chagrin, she simply lay underneath him. I was at first disappointed (I've never seen interspecies anything, much less erotica) but then the bull proceeded to defecate right on her bosom! It was a rare treat to see an ancient tradition enacted so precisely.

Unfortunately, this was the high point of their performance. It turns out, the BFMV foursome has no real concept of heavy metal. Apparently, it doesn't translate to their native tongue. Backstage, and after a few drinks, I discovered they are actually an extremely talented mariachi band. They hope to use their rock and roll fame to launch a career playing the music they are truly passionate about.

But before BFMV had a chance, Cannibal Corpse stole the show. I can only describe the experience as both mind-crushing and ingenious. They skipped generic moshing, and pushed their audience straight to the "Wall of Death." In what I later discovered is a well-known satanic ceremony, the band divided its fans in half, and stood them on either side of the stage. They played a guitar riff so mind-blowing that every fan temporarily lost all bodily control. They ran at each other in a blind rage, killing or maiming one person a fter another. Gradually, as the song ended, the scene devolved into an ordinary mosh pit, where fans beat each other senseless on top of the corpses they just created.

In another impressively creative move, Corpsegrinder called for a "Circle Pit." Here, the fans chased each other around in a circle. Many bands call for circle pits, but Cannibal Corpse puts an inventive new spin on the idea. Corpse fans actually attempt to eat each other. It sparked strong images of Darwinistic food chains in my mind as I watched fan after fan be devoured. The last man standing raised his arms in triumph, but Corpsegrinder quickly snatched the hands off. I have been to several of these concerts, and no one ever sees him coming. It's quite a hilarious display. He then ate the arms in quite a civilized manner—with fork and knife on a candle-lit table.

You would expect the show to end once all the audience members are eaten, but somehow Corpse fans just keep coming—it's almost as if they regenerate. The band has admitted that their name, Cannibal Corpse, refers to cannibalistic zombies. It is my theory that they aim to turn every audience member into a Corpse-worshipping zombie, thus creating a venerable army with Corpsegrinder at the helm. The band has denied this outright, but I caught some suspicious looks passing between them. I will be investigating further.

After each show, I like to scour the war-torn earth for picks as souvenirs of my favorite performances. I had to sift through several layers of blood and limbs, but I found one. I also discovered a survivor of the "Wall of Death." Questioning how he might have escaped, I did my duty as a fan, and consumed him raw. The pick actually served quite well as a utensil. I don't plan to clean it, just to keep the memories fresh. I believe it has some remnants of eyeball on it, which some may consider tacky; I say to them, if you had been there, then you would know.

If you had been there, then you would know—that eloquently and succinctly sums up my experience. As much as I may try to recreate it in my critique, I cannot express to you the true sense of mayhem this day held. Some lost limbs, several lost their sanity, and thousands lost their lives, but I tell you it was worth it. At what other venue can you join a raucous crowd in yelling "Erection!" at Behemoth's command? (The Polish band, in classic Norwegian style, played the song "I Have Erection" for their encore.) My only wish is that MayhemFest will live on for years, decades, even centuries, so that every generation can experience this life-changing phenomenon.

GUNWHALE

by Michael Stephens

Deep within the bowels of a top-level government laboratory, there exists a secret facility. Deep within the bowels of a top-level government agent, there exists a polyp. Tune in next week for more on that. But right now, prepare to be amazed, as we take you on an exclusive tour of a factory right within our own borders that mass produces biological weaponry the likes of which you've never seen before. As far as the public is concerned, it does not exist. As far as a couple of lucky hoboes taking refuge on a beach in Rhode Island are concerned, it's just an unusually large and uncommonly underwater dumpster that surfaces once a month to provide the greatest sustenance ever known to hobokind. But now, for the first time since that special aired on the History Channel last summer, and again last month, and again last week, the truth will be revealed. We're going to take you on a tour and show you some of the unique marine weapons being harbored (no pun intended—just kidding, pun totally intended) at the US Navy's Guarded United National Warehouse Harvesting Animals Like Explosives, or GUNWHALE. Due to our lack of time, budget, and license as an actual journalistic network, we can only give you a brief description of some of the GUNWHALE's more ambitious projects.

Project CLAM CHOWDER

Clams with time bombs in them instead of pearls. May be discontinued, as tests have found them to be not only less expensive (and therefore obvious inferior in the government's eyes) but also less effective as explosives than clams with pearls in them.

Project ANTI-AIR OTTER

Adorable aquatic animals armed with anti-aircraft attack abilities. Can also crack an enemy combatant open on their chest, assuming that that enemy combatant is an oyster.

Project TORPEDO TORPEDO

Electric rays of the genus Torpedo, pumped full of gunpowder and altered to function as the submarine projectile weapon that was named after them.

Project IRONIC MOBY DICK

Whales armed with back-mounted harpoon launchers, designed primarily to take down lighter vessels and/or other whales.

Project ALBATROSS

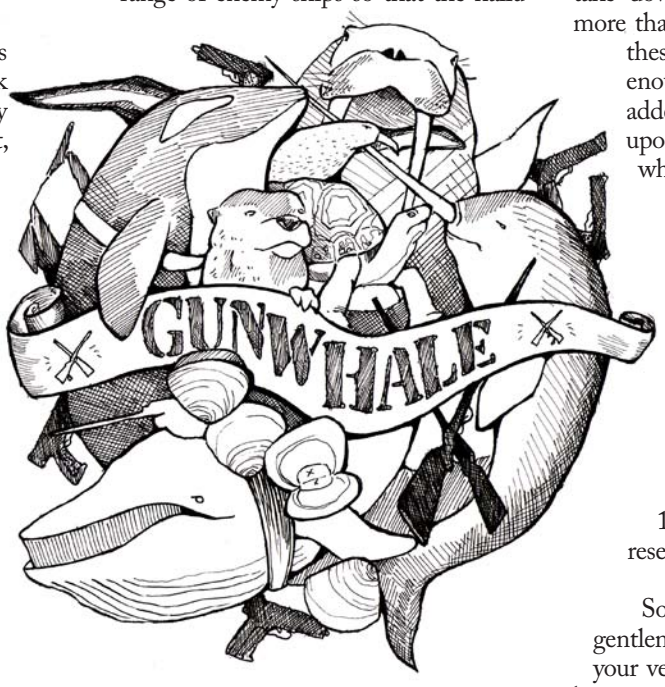
Seabirds equipped with bombs to be dropped on enemy ships. Chosen over the more logical and obvious choices of gulls or pelicans in hopes that enemy captains will understand the literary significance of an approaching albatross and retreat before any real conflict needs to be initiated.

Project SHAKESPEARE'S BIBLE

Large guns that shoot giant genetically engineered man-eating turtles that also give off nuclear radiation.

Project KOO KOO KACHOO

Walruses that emit psychedelic spores, dropped into the ocean within range of enemy ships so that the hallucinogens they exude may reach enemy combatants and impair their judgment, reaction time, and general mental clarity. Originally a British invention.



Project BLOOD TIDE

Massive quantities of algae assembled and launched in unison to create a man-made algal bloom. Primary function is to intimidate enemies into thinking we have a present-day Moses on our side, and he has set the first plague upon them. Secondary function is to eat clean through enemy ships with the highly corrosive acid they've been genetically engineered to secrete.

Project NARWHAL

A bunch of narwhals trained to take down enemy ships with nothing more than their horns. The military felt these things were already badass enough and no weapons systems added to them could improve upon their preexisting design. We wholeheartedly agree.

The GUNWHALE itself is also a fully functional mobile base of military operations, armed with over a hundred guns and missile launchers. Also, it gets basic cable and has a fully equipped fitness center for employees and guests alike. Rooms starting at $99/night. Call 1-800-GUNWHALE for reservations.

So there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. You've now seen a side of your very own military that has never been seen before. Except in those three History Channel specials and that educational TV show PBS did. Whether it ever sees the light of day or simply stays hidden in a secret laboratory forever, this revolutionary new technology will definitely change the way wars are fought. Unless it stays hidden in a secret laboratory forever. Goodnight, thanks for watching, and tune in next week to see those aforementioned bowels.

Bop it!
BOPit
twist it!
Pull it!
KILL FAMILY
TELL NO ONE
it

OH
NOOOOO